# Lesson Element Exploring Shakespeare’s language

## Task 1 The Mighty Line and its effects

Speech from *Tamburlaine the* Great (1587) by Christopher Marlowe.

TAMBURLAINE

Then sit thou down, divine Zenocrate;

And here we crown thee Queen of Persia,

And all the kingdoms and dominions

That late the power of Tamburlaine subdu'd.

As Juno, when the giants were suppress'd,

That darted mountains at her brother Jove,

So looks my love, shadowing in her brows

Triumphs and trophies for my victories;

Or as Latona's daughter, bent to arms,

Adding more courage to my conquering mind.

To gratify thee, sweet Zenocrate,

Egyptians, Moors, and men of Asia,

From Barbary unto the Western India,

Shall pay a yearly tribute to thy sire;

And from the bounds of Afric to the banks

Of Ganges shall his mighty arm extend.--

And now, my lords and loving followers,

That purchas'd kingdoms by your martial deeds,

Cast off your armour, put on scarlet robes,

Mount up your royal places of estate,

Environed with troops of noblemen,

And there make laws to rule your provinces:

Hang up your weapons on Alcides' post;

For Tamburlaine takes truce with all the world.--

Thy first-betrothed love, Arabia,

Shall we with honour, as beseems, entomb

With this great Turk and his fair emperess.

Then, after all these solemn exequies,

We will our rites of marriage, solemnise.

* Break the speech down into syntactical units: sentences, idea groups. In what ways does the verse help this?
* Does Marlowe use the rhythm to help him emphasise key words?
* Look at the relationship between what is being said, and the rhythmic emphasis of the pentameters.
* Which lines and phrases strike you as particularly memorable?
* How does the focus of the speech move?
* Who is Tamburlaine addressing at each stage?
* How effective, dramatically, does the speech seem to you to be?

Two Speeches from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (1599)

1. ***BRUTUS*** goes into the pulpit

Third Citizen

The noble Brutus is ascended: silence!

BRUTUS

Be patient till the last.  
Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my  
cause, and be silent, that you may hear: believe me  
for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that  
you may believe: censure me in your wisdom, and  
awake your senses, that you may the better judge.  
If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of  
Caesar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to Caesar  
was no less than his. If then that friend demand  
why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer:  
--Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved  
Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living and  
die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live  
all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him;  
as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was  
valiant, I honour him: but, as he was ambitious, I  
slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his  
fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his  
ambition. Who is here so base that would be a  
bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended.  
Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If  
any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so  
vile that will not love his country? If any, speak;  
for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

**All**

None, Brutus, none.

1. ***ANTONY***

You gentle Romans,--

**Citizens**

Peace, ho! let us hear him.  
**ANTONY**

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones;  
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus  
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.  
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest--  
For Brutus is an honourable man;  
So are they all, all honourable men--  
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.  
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:  
But Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honourable man.  
He hath brought many captives home to Rome  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:  
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?  
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:  
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honourable man.

You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And, sure, he is an honourable man.  
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,  
But here I am to speak what I do know.

You all did love him once, not without cause:  
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?  
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;  
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,  
And I must pause till it come back to me.

Before reading the speech together, listen to each read aloud.

Which has the greater impact?

Evaluate the difference made by verse.

## Task 2. Hearing a play: engaging as you read.

**ACT I, SCENE I.**On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard.

*Enter a Master and a Boatswain*

**Master**Boatswain!

**Boatswain**Here, master: what cheer?

**Master**Good, speak to the mariners: fall to't, yarely,  
or we run ourselves aground: bestir, bestir.

*Exit*

*Enter Mariners*

**Boatswain**Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly, my hearts!  
yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the  
master's whistle. Blow, till thou burst thy wind,  
if room enough!

*Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND, GONZALO, and others*

**ALONSO**Good boatswain, have care. Where's the master?  
Play the men.

**Boatswain**I pray now, keep below.

**ANTONIO**Where is the master, boatswain?

**Boatswain**Do you not hear him? You mar our labour: keep your  
cabins: you do assist the storm.

**GONZALO**Nay, good, be patient.

**Boatswain**When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers  
for the name of king? To cabin: silence! trouble us not.

**GONZALO**Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

**Boatswain**None that I more love than myself. You are a  
counsellor; if you can command these elements to  
silence, and work the peace of the present, we will  
not hand a rope more; use your authority: if you  
cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make  
yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of  
the hour, if it so hap. Cheerly, good hearts! Out  
of our way, I say.

*Exit*

**GONZALO**I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he  
hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is  
perfect gallows. Stand fast, good Fate, to his  
hanging: make the rope of his destiny our cable,  
for our own doth little advantage. If he be not  
born to be hanged, our case is miserable.

*Exeunt*

*Re-enter Boatswain*

**Boatswain**

Down with the topmast! yare! lower, lower! Bring  
her to try with main-course.

*A cry within*

A plague upon this howling! they are louder than  
the weather or our office.

*Re-enter SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, and GONZALO*

Yet again! what do you here? Shall we give o'er  
and drown? Have you a mind to sink?

**SEBASTIAN**A pox o' your throat, you bawling, blasphemous,  
incharitable dog!

**Boatswain**

Work you then.

**ANTONIO**

Hang, cur! hang, you whoreson, insolent noisemaker!  
We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

**GONZALO**

I'll warrant him for drowning; though the ship were  
no stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an  
unstanched wench.

**Boatswain**

Lay her a-hold, a-hold! set her two courses off to  
sea again; lay her off.

*Enter Mariners wet*

**Mariners**

All lost! to prayers, to prayers! all lost!

**Boatswain**

What, must our mouths be cold?

**GONZALO**

The king and prince at prayers! let's assist them,  
For our case is as theirs.

**SEBASTIAN**

I'm out of patience.

**ANTONIO**

We are merely cheated of our lives by drunkards:  
This wide-chapp'd rascal--would thou mightst lie drowning  
The washing of ten tides!

**GONZALO**

He'll be hang'd yet,  
Though every drop of water swear against it  
And gape at widest to glut him.

*A confused noise within: 'Mercy on us!'-- 'We split, we split!'--'Farewell, my wife and children!'-- 'Farewell, brother!'--'We split, we split, we split!'*

**ANTONIO**

Let's all sink with the king.

**SEBASTIAN**

Let's take leave of him.

*Exeunt ANTONIO and SEBASTIAN*

**GONZALO**

Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an  
acre of barren ground, long heath, brown furze, any  
thing. The wills above be done! but I would fain  
die a dry death.

*Exeunt*

In this activity, we look at the opening scene of The Tempest (1611)

Jacobean playgoers would have talked of going to ‘hear’, not ‘see’ a play. Nevertheless, this play has a particularly spectacular opening.

Wenceslas Hollar’s ‘Long View of London’ (1647) shows that the Globe was close to one of the busiest waterways in Europe. (This may be easily accessed on the internet, and is worth looking at in detail.)

(Consider that the audience will contain people with experience of shipwreck, stress at sea, and storms. The detail needed to be convincing. How might the multiple levels of the original theatre have been exploited to stage the scene?)

Practicalities of rehearsal in Shakespeare's time

Boatswain’s Part: **ACT I, SCENE I.**

On a ship at sea: a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard.

*Enter a Master and a Boatswain*

–––––––––– Boatswain!

Here, master: what cheer?

––––––––––– bestir, bestir.

(Exit)

(Enter Mariners)

Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly, my hearts!

yare, yare!Take in the topsail. Tend to the

master's whistle. Blow, till thou burst thy wind,

if room enough!

(Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND, GONZALO, and others)

–––––––––– Play the man   
I pray now, keep below.

–––––––––– master, boatswain?

Do you not hear him? You mar our labour: keep your

cabins: you do assist the storm.

–––––––––– be patient.

When the sea is. Hence! What cares these roarers

for the name of king? To cabin: silence! trouble us not.

–––––––– thou hast aboard.

None that I more love than myself. You are a

counsellor; if you can command these elements to

silence, and work the peace of the present, we will

not hand a rope more; use your authority: if you

cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make

yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of

the hour, if it so hap. Cheerly, good hearts! Out

of our way, I say.

(Exit Boatswain) –––––––– our case is miserable.(Re-enter Boatswain)

Down with the topmast! yare! Lower, bring her to try with main-course.

(A cry within)

A plague upon this howling! they are louder than the weather or our office

(Re-enter SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, and GONZALO)

Yet again! What do you here? Shall we give o’er and drown? Have you a mind to sink?

–––––––– incharitable dog!

Work you then.

–––––––– unstanched wench.

Lay her a-hold, a-hold! set her two courses off to

sea again; lay her off.

(Enter Mariners wet)

–––––––– to prayers! all lost!

What, must our mouths be cold?

(Exeunt)

The original players would have had only their own ‘part’ to learn from, each speech preceded by a cue of one or two words. This must have demanded astonishing sharpness of attention from actors:

Try it yourself.

The student playing the Boatswain should not have the full script: this individual will have to listen very carefully to the other actors: it would be worth ‘passing around’ the Boatswain’s role to discuss the effect on performance of this kind of rehearsal.

How easy is it to ‘take’ cues written like this?

We know that only one or two words were given as cues among Shakespeare’s company. Why might this be?

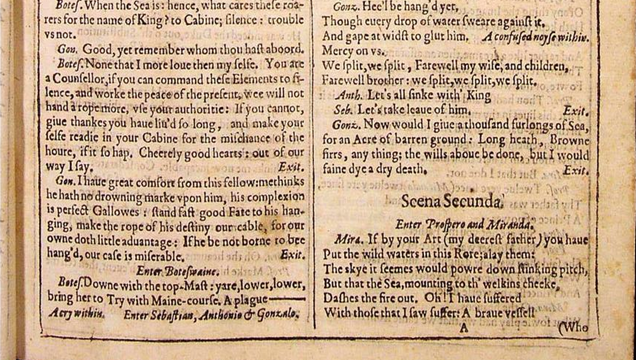
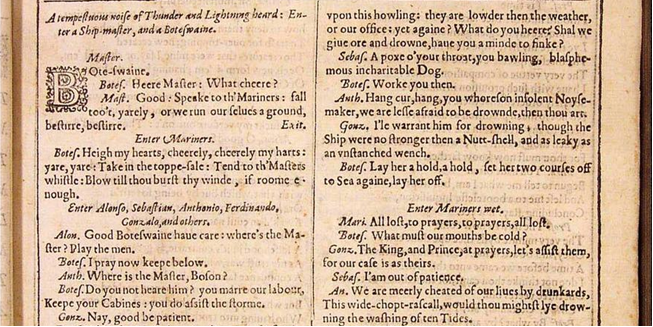
### Supplementary activity: The effects of modern editing*.*

Modern editors have taken early editions of Shakespeare and re-punctuated it, adding exclamation marks, extra scene directions and information, and removing the capitals which were used by Elizabethan and Jacobean writers sometimes apparently at random, sometimes to denote certain classes of nouns, and sometimes for emphasis.

Has this standardisation caused us to lose something?

On the following page is a picture of the first page of *The Tempest -* the scene you have just been working on - in its originally published format in the First Folio, published by some of his fellow actors in 1623 after his death.

* Consider the effect of the ‘raw’ text, as laid out on the page
* Look at the modern edition.
* What has been changed?
* What has been added?
* Are there ways in which the older text could be seen as more immediate and dramatic?
* Is there an argument for giving actors the ‘older’ text to work from?



## Task 3 Developing a sensitivity to tone and register

Register in plays

| **Level** | **Characteristics of Modern language as identified by Professor Martin Joos** | **Everyday Usage, both in the 16th and 17th century and now** | **Use in the Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Context: using ‘Othello’ as an example** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Frozen | The words stay the same. Examples: the Lord’s Prayer, The Pledge of Allegiance | Prescribed and highly formal official language, such as Military Commissions, Court Judgements and Sentences: Prayers, Incantations, Blessings, Curses: any prescribed formula of words (such as a police caution, or a court oath). | The Commission the Senate give to Othello:  opening phrases in council meeting  **Almost always in blank verse in Drama** |
| Formal | The word-choice and sentence structure used by the business community. Uses a 1,200 word to 1,600 word spoken vocabulary.  Example “This assignment is not acceptable in its present format.” | Formal speech, especially when heavily specialised, such as in commerce or education: often used to address a group. Examples: a Parliamentary enquiry; School Assembly; a school inspection report, a formal University Lecture or symposium. Heavily structured documents, such as instruction books and manuals. | Brabantio’s accusation (but lapses towards consultative when passion overwhelms him): Othello’s commands - ‘Keep up your bright Swords’ - Othello’s and Desdemona’s defence of their love: Desdemona’s appeal to accompany Othello to Cyprus. ‘Nevermore be officer of mine’.  **Frequently in blank verse in Drama** |
| Consultative | A mix of formal and casual register. Example: “I can’t accept the assignment the way it is.” | Used when teaching in a relatively to-and-fro atmosphere: peer-to-peer consultation, business meetings which involve discussion. May occasionally use specialist vocabulary, such as in relaxed teaching or professional groups. | The discussion in the council: slightly racier, inquiries, such as Othello’s investigation into the brawl on the Wedding night. Some of Iago’s address to the audience ‘thus do I ever make my fool my purse’:  **Sometimes in verse, sometimes in prose** |
| Casual | Language used by friends, which comes out or the oral tradition. Contains few abstract words and uses non-verbal assists. Example ‘“This work is a no-go. Can’t take it.” | Chatty or casual language used in close social groups: banter, set-piece jokes and catch-phrases: much jargon (involving technical terminology). May involve slang, 'in-jokes', nick-names, references to songs and popular culture. | Much of Iago’s conversation with Roderigo - repetition ‘put money in thy purse’ (veering toward the intimate) - some of Iago’s conversation with Cassio, and the banter with Desdemona on arriving on the island - dialogue with and between servants/clown/ musicians  **Generally in prose** |
| Intimate | Private language shared between two individuals, such as lovers or twins. | Can also be used between intimate groups - teams, small tightly-knit co-operative workers. Text messaging and coded messages between lovers/partners. | Much of the Willow Scene: some moments of affection between Othello and Desdemona earlier in the play: occasional moments of affection.  **Can be in verse or prose (sometimes lyrical)** |

In the course of a day, as the Dutch linguistics specialist Martin Joos has observed, every one of us uses a wide variety of different ‘registers’ of language, from the casual to the formal.

For a brief discussion of ‘register’ as a sociolinguistic concept see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Register_(sociolinguistics)>

The chart ‘Register in plays’ defines Professor Joos’s five levels of register.

1. Consider your own use of register during the day

Identify contexts and transactions - in the common room, in an assembly, in class

Look at the categories in column 1 and relate them to you everyday life

2. Look at the ways in which the diagram identifies register in *Othello.*

3. It may be helpful to look back at the extract 3 from *The Tempest.*

Relate the 'Register in plays' chart to the scene

This can be discussed in terms of

* The sailors' use of jargon and technical terms
* The ways in which the sailors interact
* The tension generated by the situation, and the way language communicates this
* The attempt by the 'aristocratic' characters to assert authority in a situation where they have little actual power
* The differences between the Court characters

This activity can then be used to generate an analysis of register variation in your chosen text.